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CATHOLIC MISSIONS IN THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES

Rev. George Wetenkamp, O.F.M., S.T.D.

(Study for the month of December 1944)

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The authors of the various studies of the Missionary Academia express their own views which are necessarily independent of the National Council of The Society for the Propagation of the Faith.

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Section I - The Fourth Century

In spite of formidable difficulties and obstacles the Church of Christ succeeded in gaining a firm foothold in all the provinces of the vast Roman Empire during the first three centuries of her existence. According to quite probable computations of historical research workers, of the total population of fifty million inhabitants living in the Roman Empire in the early part of the fourth century from seven to seven and a half million, at the lowest, were Christians.

1. Christianity in the Roman Empire

A. Among the Romans

1. The fourth century may be called the century of the Christianization of the Roman Empire as a whole or the transformation of the ancient pagan Roman State into a Christian commonwealth. This, of course, does not mean that the entire ancient worship of the pagan gods was eradicated, that men and morals became perfectly christianized, that rulers and governments were henceforth in full accord with the principles and laws of Christianity. If we speak of a Christianization of the Roman Empire we mean that the pagan religion was officially dislodged from its place of honor, prestige and influence in public life and its controlling domination of the religious and moral life of the great majority of the inhabitants of the empire came to an end. By the close of the century the Christian religion was the officially approved religion of the state and the Gospel of Christ the recognized law of moral conduct. The great majority of the subjects of Rome had definitely renounced the worship of the false gods and professed the Christian faith. Already at the beginning of the last quarter of the century the worship of the gods had disappeared from the cities and had become restricted to rural districts to such an extent that the adherents of the old heathen religion began to be called *pagani*—country folk, which term gave rise to the name commonly used to designate the religion they professed—paganism.

2. The first factor that contributed to the immense growth and expansion of the Church of Christ in the Roman Empire is the important change of the political, social and economic status of Christianity in the Empire brought about by the historical developments of events that took place in the early decades of the century.

The victory of the first Christian-minded Emperor Constantine I over his pagan rival Maxentius at the Milvian bridge near Rome on Oct. 28, 312, which the victor ascribed to the help of the God of the Christians signalized the beginning of the surrender of the pagan Roman State to the Cross of Christ. It paved the way for the promulgation of the so-called Edict of Milan by Constantine and his co-regent Licinius in February, 313. This imperial ordinance was beyond doubt an act of prime importance with regard to the future state and fate of religion in the Empire. It granted to the hitherto outlawed and persecuted Church of Christ sincere tolerance and full legal freedom in the exercise of its beneficent mission. While not outlawing and prohibiting the ancient worship of the gods it gave to the religion and worship of the one true God perfect equality before the law with its false pretender and thus opened the door to free competition between the religion of truth, virtue and holiness and the heathen religion of superstition. Left to itself and deprived of the external support and aid of the mighty arm of the Roman State paganism, the work of the powers of darkness, had to succumb to the superior, heavenborn light and power of Christ's Gospel of truth and holiness.

3. The attitude and policy of friendly tolerance adopted by Constantine I and his immediate successors soon developed into an attitude of benevolent preference which showed itself in public expressions of respect and esteem for the religion of Christ and of disregard and even contempt of paganism. Openly these rulers began to exhort their subjects to abandon the latter and to embrace the former. By conferring high civil and military offices and dignities on Christians, by granting privileges to bishops and other officers of the Church they encouraged conversion to Christianity. By generous donations and benefactions they aided the Church in developing greater splendor of ritual in her liturgical functions and facilitated the exercise of her missionary activity. The gradual bringing of legislative enactments and administrative

measures more in harmony with the teaching and spirit of the Gospel positively promoted the progress of the true religion in their dominions. Hand in hand with these favors to Christianity went the gradual withdrawal of the privileges and prerogatives which the pagan cult had hitherto enjoyed.

It is true this policy of Constantine I and his sons called forth a strong reaction on the part of a powerful party of protagonists of the dethroned pagan gods, when *Julian the Apostate* (361-363) became head of the Empire. His energetic attempt to restore the cult of Rome's gods to its former place of honor, prestige and influence was crowned with only partial success, and this faded away with his death on the Persian battlefield on July 26, 363.

The Emperors of the last quarter of the fourth century, Gratian (375-383), Theodosius I (379-395) and Valentinian II (383-392) promoted the downfall of paganism by a series of prohibitory decrees. All state subsidies granted to the pagan worship were abolished, the revenues of pagan priests and Vestal Virgins were withdrawn, the possessions and properties of pagan temples turned to other public uses. Finally a joint ordinance of Theodosius I and Valentinian II signed in 392 forbade not only all sacrificial worship of the gods but even visits to their temples and the veneration of their images. But these measures did not remain unchallenged. A powerful party of Roman nobles headed by the fanatical Prefect of Italy, Flavianus Nicomachus, still clung stubbornly to the old religion and was determined to recapture Rome for the ancient gods. They proclaimed Eugenius, a baptized rhetorician, Emperor after Valentinian II had been murdered by Arbogast, the heathen Frankish general of his army. Eugenius and Arbogast at the head of a strong army with Flavianus as officiating priest marched toward Aquileja to fight Theodosius I, the champion of Christianity, who was approaching with a small army of Eastern troops, reinforced by his Gothic allies. The decisive battle was fought on the Fridigus River near Aquileja Sept. 5, 394. After a night spent in prayer Theodosius won a complete victory over the usurper, who was captured in battle and executed. Arbogastus fell on his own sword. Flavianus had perished in an earlier engagement. The cause of Christianity triumphed. The last armed struggle of paganism against the supremacy of Christianity ended in complete failure. Henceforth the Catholic Church was to be and remain the *Church of the Roman Empire.*

Gratifying to all Christians and beneficial to the progress and growth of their religion this aid and support of the Roman rulers certainly must be called, but it was by no means an unmixed blessing for the Church of Christ. Only too often this active interest of the Roman Caesars in the progress of religion degenerated into unwarranted, troublesome and pernicious meddling with the internal affairs of the Church. The old pagan idea of State-omnipotence was so deeply rooted in the political and social traditions of the past that even the best of Christian Roman Emperors could not divest themselves entirely of its influence.

4. The tremendous change in the political and social status of Christianity effected by the friendly alliance of Church and State inaugurated by Constantine I and consolidated by later Emperors helped to smooth the way to entrance into the Christian fold for many who dreaded to take the step when social disadvantages seemed inseparable from the profession of the Christian faith and even bloody persecution threatened the lives of loyal followers of Christ. A vast multitude of pagans entered the Church in the course of the fourth century, but unfortunately it is an undeniable fact that for many conversion was little more than an external formality devoid of an interior change of mind and heart. Besides these converts there was a considerable number of others, who although sincere believers, were pitiful weaklings in the practice of their faith and made deplorable concessions to paganism's easy way of living. The writings of the Fathers of the Church of the fourth century bear testimony to these shady sides of Christian life in that age and their impartial love of truth and glowing zeal for the glory of God, the honor of the Church, and the salvation of souls made them fearless in denouncing this shameful contradiction between belief and practice and indefatigable in promoting penance, reform and moral improvement. On the other hand the laxity, lukewarmness, and cowardly compromising with paganism's form of living which tainted the lives of many members of the Church, stimulated others to heroic world-renouncement and persistent efforts to imitate as closely as possible the example of Christ the King to whom they had sworn allegiance at the solemn moment when they received the holy Sacraments of Christian Initiation. The flowering of Christian Asceticism and Christian Monasticism throughout the length and breadth of the Roman

Empire is a splendid proof of the power and the success of the Church's sanctifying ministrations. Zealous preaching of the sublime doctrines of Christ's Gospel, diligent use of the supernatural means of grace given to His Church, the mighty influence of examples of eminent virtue and holiness of life—these were the chief and positive causes that transformed the old pagan Empire into a Christian State. This work of interior regeneration and sanctification of the souls of men was carried on by the Church quietly and noiselessly and is not recorded in historical documents at least not in greater part, but the fruits and effects are proved historical facts.

B. Beginnings of Christianity Among the Barbarians in the Roman Empire

5. While devoting herself zealously to the thorough Christianization of the original Roman population of the Empire the Church did not fail to give her attention also to the increasing number of barbarians that formed a large percentage of the Roman army and also began to settle more or less permanently in the border regions of the Empire. The ancient religion of the pagan Teutonic tribes that began to invade the Roman Empire had been greatly undermined by contact with the civilization of the Graeco-Roman world in the course of the past three centuries. The superstitious beliefs and practices no longer satisfied their needs and the natural yearning of their souls for the consoling and encouraging light of religious truth, and for relief and help in the stern struggles of life, made them inclined to accept the message of redemption and salvation which Christianity was bringing to all, Greek and barbarian alike. The details of the early beginnings of the conversion of the Teutonic tribes to Christianity are rather indistinct and uncertain. In general, the work of conversion did not progress from the lower to the higher classes of society as was the case in the Christianization of the cultured Graeco-Roman world but rather from the top downward. As a rule the chieftain or head of a tribe embraced the Christian faith and his example was followed by his loyal tribesmen. Conversion to the Christian religion was in this case not only a personal, religious act but also a deed of political loyalty and allegiance. Moreover, as far as we know, no compulsory means were employed during the century of barbarian invasions to bring these people into the fold of Christ. The records do however

report severe persecutions of German Christians and German Catholics by their pagan and Arian fellow-tribesmen. Here we must note a peculiar circumstance connected with the conversion of the Teuton world. Most of the Teutonic tribes that settled within the confines of the Roman Empire embraced Christianity in the perverted form of Arianism. An explanation of this strange phenomenon may be found in the circumstances that attended the conversion of the first tribe of Teutons that accepted the Gospel of Christ, the *Visigoths*. Since the third century they had settled on the banks of the lower Danube, the western and the northern border of the Black Sea. A bishop of "Gothia" named Theophilus was present at the Council of Nicea in 325. Greater progress in the work of conversion of the tribe was made when *Ulfilas* (or *Wulfila*) a Goth by birth and a descendant of a family of Christian prisoners of war from Cappadocia, devoted himself for forty years (340-383) to missionary work among his fellow-tribesmen living north and south of the Danube River. In 341, Ulfilas had been consecrated "bishop of the Christians in the country of the Goths" by Eusebius, the Arian-minded Bishop of Constantinople. By his invention of a Gothic alphabet, of a written language, and by a translation of a great portion of the Bible into his native tongue Ulfilas facilitated the work of evangelization of the Goths and also laid the foundations of a Teutonic literature.—When the Visigoths received permission from Emperor Valens, the imperial protector and promoter of Arianism, to settle in Thrace in 375, the acceptance of Arianism became general among the Visigoths. Due to their influence, Arianism became the Creed of Ostrogoths, Suevi, Alans, Vandals, Burgundians and Lombards. The religious and ecclesiastical *Particularism* thus created among the Teutonic tribes that soon set up their kingdoms on the ruins of the fallen West Roman Empire was jealously guarded by them as a national heirloom. It put them into permanent opposition to the universality of the Catholic Church and proved to be a source of great disadvantages for themselves and of grave oppression, vexation and even bloody persecution for the conquered Roman population of the Empire. Besides converting pagans to Christianity the Church accordingly had the task of converting the Teutons from heresy to orthodoxy. Eminent among her missionaries who zealously labored for the conversion of both heretics and pagans in the Western Empire are: St. Am-

brose, Archbishop of Milan, and St. Martin of Tours who both died in 397. Of the former, Philip Hughes (in his "History of the Church" I) well says: "By his goodness Ambrose persuaded many Arians, by his strength he defeated the rest. . . When he died in 397 he left Catholicism secure, even at the head of the secular world. On his faith and will Arianism in the (Western) Empire was broken. The Roman world soon was to sink in ruin but the Roman Church was to stand, secure, undefiled; Ambrose was the Holy Spirit's agent to that end."

What Ambrose was for Italy, St. Martin of Tours was for Gaul—the Holy Spirit's agent to the same end but in a different way. Monk within, Apostle without, this agent may be called. During his episcopal administration of about twenty-five years (ab. 371-397) he promoted the spread of monasticism in Gaul and through his disciples in Spain and Britain, zealously preached the Gospel to the pagans in the rural districts of Gaul, and like his master, St. Hilary of Poitiers, staunchly opposed the advance of Arianism.

6. No less illustrious agents of the Holy Spirit than Ambrose and Martin and others in the West, do we find at the same time in the Eastern section of Church and Empire. The names of St. Athanasius of Alexandria (d. 373), St. Basil the Great of Caesarea in Cappadocia (d. 379), St. Gregory of Nazianzen (d. ab. 390) and St. Cyril of Jerusalem (d. 386) recall lives of apostolic zeal and intense activity in behalf of the spread and defense of the Christian faith against heresy and pagan superstition, that reflect honor on the Church of the fourth century and furnish inspiration to all succeeding generations. In this connection the name of another eminent champion of Christian living and apostolic missioner of the Eastern Church deserves special mention. It is St. John Chrysostom (d. 407) the eloquent Preacher of Antioch in Syria and Archbishop of Constantinople since the year 398. Not only to the promotion of truly Christian living among those already in the fold of Christ did this saintly prelate devote his eloquent preaching in season and out of season, but also to drawing heretics and pagans into the pale of Christ's saving Kingdom was his burning zeal directed. Many of the Arians around Constantinople were Goths. Chrysostom was fired with the desire to convert all, pagans and heretics alike. Nor was his zeal confined to the near-by

Goths. He sent missioners to their colonies around the mouth of the Danube River and along the northern shore of the Black Sea and even to the Crimea. He consecrated a bishop of their own race for the Catholics by the name of Unilas of whom he speaks very highly. Early in his episcopate, with funds supplied by wealthy women of Constantinople and Antiochene merchants, he sent a large number of missioners to Phoenicia where the Cult of Astarte and Baal in various syncretistic forms was still flourishing. These missionary enterprises were so near and dear to the Saint's heart that even in the years of his exile he did not forget them. From Cucusus he wrote to priests and exhorted them to go to Phoenicia. To those already there he sent letters of encouragement. When Bishop Unilas died, Chrysostom lamented his own absence from Constantinople because it made it impossible for him to secure a worthy successor, and he feared that the good accomplished among the Goths might be undone. From his letters to St. Olympias, the zealous and loyal deaconess in Constantinople, we learn that he was planning a mission to the Zoroastrians in Persia. It was in the Providence of God that the Saint should not be free to carry out his plan. On Sept. 14, 407, his frail body succumbed to the hardships and sufferings of exile and his apostolic soul took its flight to heaven to receive the glorious reward promised by the Divine Master to his apostles. The burning zeal for spiritual conquests of souls that filled the heart of Chrysostom was not confined to the borders of the Roman Empire. The same zeal urged others to go beyond its borders in quest of souls.

2. Christianity Outside the Roman Empire

A. Persia

1. Christian missioners had carried the light of the Gospel into Persia in the third century. At the beginning of the fourth century the Church was in a flourishing condition. Several bishoprics existed which were united under the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan See, Seleucia-Ctesiphon.

Political prejudice and suspicion, the powerful influence of fanatical magi and the anti-christian machinations of the numerous Jews living in the land incited King Schapur II (309-381) to open a persecution of Christians which continued, with interruptions, for a period of about 300 years and which rivalled in bit-

terness and cruelty the Roman persecutions of the first three centuries. Sozomen, the historian, asserts that the names of 16,000 Christians who suffered in the persecution begun by King Schapur in 342 are on record. The venerable Archbishop Simeon together with 100 clerica, members of the royal court and the King's own daughter were among the first to win the martyrs' crown. Soon after the close of another persecution in 450 Persia became the center of Nestorianism. Being banished from the Roman Empire, the Nestorians settled in Persia where they found favor at the royal court and suppressed Catholicism.

B. Armenia

2. At the opening of the fourth century *Greater Armenia* officially joined the family of Christian Nations. St. Gregory, surnamed Illuminator, baptized King Tiridates in 302 who declared the Christian religion the officially established religion of his realm and ordered the pagan temples to be destroyed. Many of the nobility followed the example of the King and many of the common people were brought into the Church by St. Gregory. The remainder was converted in the course of the fourth century. When the greater part of the kingdom was conquered by the Persians in 428 the conquerors tried to force Parsism upon the vanquished Armenians but met with stubborn resistance.

C. Africa—Abyssinia

3. Abyssinia (Ethiopia) in Africa received the tidings of salvation from *Frumentius* and *Aedisius*, two Christian young men from Tyre, who had been taken captive in a port of Abyssinia by barbarians on a return journey from India and were brought to the royal court at Axuma (326). They won great influence at court and used their favorable position to spread the Christian faith. Frumentius obtained a high office and thereby an increase of prestige at court. King Aizanas became a Christian and by this example attracted others to the new religion. In 328 Frumentius was consecrated Bishop of Axuma by St. Athanasius of Alexandria. By his zealous labors for the propagation of the faith in Abyssinia he won the honorable title "Apostle of Abyssinia." The work of converting the people of the country made rapid progress. When

Emperor Constantius tried to drag Abyssinia into Arianism in 356 by making an appeal to the King to this effect, he failed completely. The Abyssinians clung steadfastly to the faith of Athanasius and Frumentius.

Section II-The Fifth and Sixth Centuries

1. Conversion of Ireland and Scotland
A. Ireland

1. The fifth century of European history is beyond doubt a century of profound changes, of great historic upheaval. It is characterized by the decay of Roman civilization, the disintegration and collapse of the West Roman Empire brought about by the invasions and conquests of the barbarian Teutonic tribes. The Catholic Church, however, stands forth amid all the turmoil, disorder and destruction in the political sphere as the one institution that proved indestructible and unchangeable. Though not immune to the suffering, tribulation and harm caused by the great upheaval the Church continued with unimpaired vigor her sublime mission of evangelizing and saving all men, victors and vanquished, be they Romans or Teutons or Celts. In spite of the general disintegration of Roman civilization in Europe, the Church made new spiritual conquests of nations and tribes for Christ's eternal Kingdom. Foremost in grandeur and importance among these conquests of the fifth century is the conquest of the only country in western Europe which had escaped a Roman invasion and had not been permeated with the leaven of Rome's gorgeous but artificial and fast decaying civilization—ancient Erin or Ireland.

2. The glad tidings of salvation through Christ the Saviour of mankind had been announced in Ireland before the fourth decade of the fifth century by missionaries coming probably from western Britain or western Gaul because Pope St. Celestine I (422-432) sent St. Palladius as first missionary bishop "ad Scottos in Christum credentes," in 431. Very likely little isolated communities of native Christians had sprung up here and there and Gallic settlers who sought refuge in Ireland from the turmoil of the Continent swelled the meagre Christian population. Such may have been

the flock to which Palladius was sent as shepherd. The new bishop labored in southern Ireland but his activity was cut short by an early death. Within a year of his coming to Ireland death overtook him in Britain. The reason for his departure from the mission field is not known. Divine Providence however had already prepared a successor for the departed shepherd, who was destined to secure for himself the glorious title *"Apostle of Ireland."* A few days before the death of Pope Celestine I in July 432 the future apostle of Ireland was consecrated bishop at Auxerre in Gaul and in the autumn, commissioned by St. Germanus on the Pope's authority, he sailed for Ireland to take up the work for which he had been prepared in manifestly providential ways.

3. At this point it may be well to hear what this chosen instrument of God has to say of himself in that beautiful record of his life known as his "Confession before Death": "I Patrick, a sinner, the most backward and least of all the Faithful and held by many in contempt, I had for my father Calpurnius a deacon, the son of Potitus the presbyter who belonged to the village of Bannavem Taberniae. Nearby he had a little country house where I was taken prisoner. At that time I was barely sixteen years of age. . . . I was led into captivity in Ireland with many thousand persons as we deserved for we turned away from God and kept not His commandments and were not obedient to our priests who used to admonish us concerning our salvation." ("Confession" quoted in Hugh De Blacam St. Patrick Apostle of Ireland (1941) p. 148.)

In view of these statements Mr. Hugh De Blacam, the most recent biographer of Ireland's Apostle, opens the narrative of his eventful life with the words: "St. Patrick tells us himself that he was born in Britain; he names a place called Bannavem Taberniae. Nobody knows for sure where this place was. Formerly, it was held by most writers that it was near Dumbarton in Scotland . . . but the chief scholars now favor the Severn valley as the likeliest region. . . . At any rate, Patrick was born somewhere in Britain about the year 385."[1] Up to his sixteenth year he lived in his na-

[1] Roman Britain is given as the birthplace of St. Patrick by the following writers and historians: Dr. Eoin MacNeill; The Birthplace of St. Patrick; Dr. Oliver St. John Gogarty, "I follow St. Patrick"—J. Rvan, S.J. in Lexicon fuer Theolgie and Kirche vol. VII, p. 216—Philip Hughes, History of the Church (1935) vol. II, p. 81—Bihlmever, Kirchengeschichte (1936) vol. I, p. 216—Poulet-Raemers, Church History, vol. I, p. 200—McSorley, Outline History of the Church (1944) p. 132.

tive land, a care-free youth, not very zealous in the service of God nor much interested in things spiritual and eternal. Then came an event that changed his life and changed history.

4. It was about the year 400 when several scores of Irish ships carried the young warriors of King Niall to the shores of Roman Britain to raid and plunder. Coming to the farm of Calpurnius, they killed some of his servants, who attempted to defend their master's property. Patricius, his sixteen-year-old son, they seized and marched with a great number of other captives to their ships, which carried plunder and captives to Ireland. Sold as a slave to a lord named Meliuc, Patricius now spent six years in servitude as keeper of his master's herds. Though much sorrow and suffering fell to his lot, benefits and blessings were not wanting. He acquired the knowledge of the Gaelic tongue and acquaintance with the manners and customs, the religion and morals of the people of the land. Moreover, the trials and hardships of exile and slavery helped to accomplish a great change in the interior, spiritual life of the young herdsman. Much prayer, frequent fasts, serious thinking of God and things eternal gradually transformed the easy-going youth into a devout Christian whose soul became more and more disposed to listen willingly to the inspirations of God's grace, calling him to strive earnestly for greatness and glory that endureth forever. Towards the end of these six years, Patricius heard in sleep a voice that bade him to return to his fatherland. Trusting in the help of God he made his flight from bondage, and after a wearisome journey reached the seashore where he found a ship bound for the Roman land. After some rebuffs the masters of the vessel took him on board and the ship floated out of Irish waters with the exile freed at last. The coast of Gaul was reached within a few days and the voyagers came ashore in a land laid waste by recent war but also enriched with spiritual blessings that emanated from the many monastic houses established within its borders.

5. After his return to the Roman world Patricius travelled in Gaul and Italy in order to educate himself for the special service of God and the Church, for which he believed himself to be destined by Divine Providence. He visited Lerins, the most famous monastery in Gaul at that time, and also became acquainted with

the monastic spirit and traditions of Marmoutier, the celebrated religious house founded by the great missionary monk St. Martin of Tours. Like many eminent missionaries after him, Patricius entered upon the monastic life and deeply imbibed the spirit of monastic asceticism which proved to be for him an excellent training for his future apostolate. At length he left the Continent and went to his own folk in Britain where he stayed some years. During this time he received the divine call to evangelize Ireland, the land of his former exile. Accordingly he left his people and native land and went to the Continent to prepare himself for a missionary career. We find him living at Auxerre, a city of Gaul, which at that time was a prominent center of ecclesiastical learning and piety. Here he is said to have been ordained deacon and to have been raised to the holy priesthood. Ten years, devoted to religious exercises, study of the Holy Scriptures and clerical training elapsed before the great desire of his heart—votum animae meae in his own phrase—the evangelization of the people of Ireland, was to be fulfilled. At about 429-430 St. Germanus of Auxerre and other Gallic ecclesiastics decided to send a missionary expedition to Ireland to carry the light of Christ's saving Gospel to its pagan inhabitants. Although Patricius had been proposed as the person best suited for the office of leader of the enterprise, his candidature was in the end rejected. St. Palladius, a Roman ecclesiastic, was chosen for the post by Pope Celestine and consecrated bishop in 431. Patricius keenly felt the humiliation and disappointment which the rejection of his candidature involved. He humbly accepted it as a trial sent by God, who wisely and lovingly humbles and exalts his own in due season. Within a year from St. Palladius' departure for the Irish mission field the news of his death in Britain reached Auxerre. Thereupon Patricius was chosen to succeed him and after receiving episcopal consecration in July 432, he sailed for Ireland in autumn to begin his apostolic work.

6. According to one of the oldest accounts the expedition numbered twenty-five persons. The Bishop had with him priests, some Gallic, some British, with artificers and others necessary to look after the material needs of missioners and mission. According to an ancient record and the testimony of tradition the missionaries

landed at the mouth of the Slane stream. The clerics went ashore and marching along for some distance, they rested in a barn where they were found by one Dichu, the lord of the place. This barn was later donated to Patricius and became the first church in Ulster. Here the conversion of Ireland began and the place has the name of *Saul* to the present day, a name derived from *sabhal*—barn. The missionary activity of Ireland's Apostle extended over a period of about thirty years 432-461. Owing to his untiring zeal, his eminent prudence in dealing with Irish customs and manner of life, his winning meekness and kindliness, reinforced by a life of intense prayer and austere penance his labors were crowned with such success that the greater part of the Irish people was in the fold of Christ when death called the Apostle away from the field of his labors.—No doubt this glorious success could not have been achieved without the help of able and zealous companions animated with the same apostolic spirit that animated their captain and leader in a very extraordinary degree.

7. As to the methods and means the Saint employed in his work of winning souls for Christ, the following points may be mentioned. Coming to a pagan district he turned his attention first to the conversion of the chiefs and leaders of the clans, knowing that if these were won to the faith, the common people would easily follow their example.

Besides erecting churches and chapels in suitable places for the newly converted pagans he also established for each clan some sort of monastery. These monastic houses became centers of missionary activity which aimed at confirming the converts in their new faith and promoting among them truly Christian living. From these settlements the missioners also set out to extend the Kingdom of Christ by winning new members.—A peculiar feature of ancient Christian life in Ireland is the great number of souls attracted to the practice of Christian perfection and holiness in the monastic state. The example of St. Patrick and his associates who were not only untiring active mission workers but also shining examples of monastic asceticism aroused the enthusiasm of countless souls, men and women, for this higher form of Christian life. The whole organization of the ancient Church in Ireland received a distinctly monastic coloring.

As the number of converts increased episcopal sees had to be

erected in various places. Their number is often said to have been surprisingly large. Research has found proof for the existence of no more than forty. It seems however that these were later reduced to twenty-two. In 439 three eminent men were sent from Gaul to join Patrick as assistant bishops. These are known to us as St. Secundius, St. Auxilius and St. Iserninus. Very probably in 444 or 445 St. Patrick chose Armagh in Ulster for his primatial See. Tara of Meath, the capital of the High-King, never had the honor of becoming an episcopal See. It seems to some writers that St. Patrick's policy was deliberately different from that followed on the Continent. Instead of establishing episcopal Sees in political capitals he established them at a friendly distance from them. Was it perhaps to stress the spiritual character of the episcopal office and its work? Furthermore, the Saint adapted the organization of the Church in Ireland to the political system existing in the country, which was altogether different from that of the Roman Empire and of the kingdoms that arose after its collapse in the West. There were no large cities in Ireland and those urban centers which had some political importance such as Tara, had no large resident population. The civilization of Ireland was based on the small rural state and the political organization was a confederacy of small states culminating in the national monarchy. The best that St. Patrick could do in the unsettled state of affairs in the fifth century was to erect bishoprics of varying importance and range of territorial authority according to the condition of the various regions in which he organized the Christian communities. Accordingly many of Patrick's bishops had only small areas of jurisdiction corresponding to the small secular communities. We behold St. Patrick and his assistants organizing the Church in a wholly rural society. The bishops had to live in little self-supporting rural establishments which easily developed into monasteries in the next century.

Synods held by St. Patrick and his three assistant bishops mentioned before, are recorded and canons drawn up for the regulation of ecclesiastical affairs bear the signatures of the four pioneer bishops. The work begun by St. Patrick and his apostolic assistants was continued by a host of missioners trained by them and inspired by their example.

In the first quarter of the sixth century Muchertach the High-King of Ireland (513-533) received baptism. Within a short time

after his entrance into the Church Ireland's conversion was completed. Within a century it became not only a Christian land but was also well advancing on the way towards reaching the honor of being the "Island of Saints."

B. Scotland

From Ireland the blessings of Christianity were brought to Scotland called Caledonia by the Romans and in medieval times Scotia minor. The first apostle of Christianity in Scotland is *St. Ninian,* of whom St. Bede the Venerable (Hist. Eccl. III, 4) tells us: "The southern Picts received the true faith by the preaching of Bishop Ninias a most reverend and holy man of the British nation who had been regularly instructed in Rome in the faith and mysteries of the truth." He labored in this mission field since about 412 and died about the year 432.—The spread of Christianity in the northern part of Scotland and in fact throughout the whole country is due to the 34 years of zealous activity of the Irish monk *St. Columba,* or *Columcille,* who is justly called "The Apostle of Scotland."—St. Columba left his native land in 563 and founded a monastery on the Island Eo, Io, I or Hy, later Iona, one of the Hebrides Islands. This monastery became the center of an extensive missionary activity and the nursery of zealous missioners, who under the direction and supervision of its Abbot carried the light of the Gospel and the boon of culture and civilization to all parts of the land of the Picts. In consequence of this origin of missionary activity in Scotland the organization of the Church in this country received strongly monastic characteristics. The Abbot of Iona had supreme jurisdiction over all workers in this mission field including those who were consecrated bishops, even though the Abbot of Iona, following the example of St. Columba, was only a priest.

Up to the 8th century the members of the clergy of the Church in Scotland were exclusively monks. A diocesan organization, properly so called, was introduced into Scotland in the 12th century. St. Columba, the great missionary, scholar, poet, and saint, died in 597. His name is dear to Scots and Irishmen alike and, on account of his noble work, held in veneration even by non-Catholics.

2. Conversion of the Franks

1. While apostolic men were conquering Ireland, Scotland for the Kingdom of Christ, similar spiritual conquests were also being made on the European Continent. Of all the Teutonic tribes that established new kingdoms within the borders of the ancient West-Roman Empire the Franks were destined by Divine Providence to obtain the leadership in Europe and to become strong supporters of Christianity and the Church. They had become acquainted with Christianity before they invaded Roman Gaul as conquerors. Although there was a sprinkling of Christians among them, the great majority was still pagan, when they began their march from the banks of the Lower Rhine to the southwest after the middle of the fifth century. Under the leadership of *Chlodwig* or *Clovis* their energetic soldier-king (481-511) they invaded the last remnant of Roman territory in Gaul, defeated the Roman governor Syagrius at Soissons in 486 and conquered the territory up to the Loire River. In 507 they extended their conquests to the south by driving the Visigoths beyond the Garonne River.

2. Clovis showed deference for the political and religious traditions of the Gallo-Romans, made no division of private property but appropriated unoccupied lands and the extensive imperial domains. Although the Franks nowhere appear as oppressors and persecutors of Christians, they were pagans. Only individuals embraced the Christian faith at first,—soon the nation as a whole was to become Christian. Unlike the Goths, Vandals and other Teutonic tribes, the Franks from the very start embraced Christianity in the pure and integral form of Catholicism. A decisive factor in accomplishing this result was the example of King Clovis. Being married to Chlotilde, a Catholic princess of the royal House of Burgundy, he yielded to the wishes of his wife and permitted his two sons to be baptized. Hereafter, as St. Gregory of Tours tells us in his History of the Franks (II, 31) it came to pass that in 496, when Clovis was hard pressed in a battle against the neighboring Alamanni he vowed to embrace the Christian faith in case of victory. He came forth victorious and promptly fulfilled his vow made to the God of Chlotilde and the Christians. On Christmas Day 496 Clovis together with 3,000 of his warriors received

holy baptism at the hands of St. Remigius, Bishop of Rheims. As was the case with the other Teutonic tribes, the conversion of the King also decided the people's choice of religion without making compulsory measures necessary. Within a comparatively short time the whole Frankish nation entered the fold of Christ.

3. The conversion of this nation is an event of prime importance in the history of the spread and development of Christianity among the Teutonic tribes that conquered the territory of the old Roman Empire on the European Continent. This was recognized already by the contemporaries of Clovis. "Vestra fides nostra victoria est" wrote St. Avitus, Archbishop of Vienne, in a letter of congratulation to the King. These words express the well-grounded opinion that the Franks would be the banner-bearers and champions of Catholicism in the Teuton world from whom their co-religionists living under other rulers could hope to receive protection, help and support when needed.—By their conversion the doom of Arianism was sealed. It frustrated the plan of propagating Arianism among the Teutons which Theodoric, King of the Ostrogoths in Italy, had conceived. That three Teutonic tribes, the Burgundians, the Suevi and the Visigoths, gave up heresy and became Catholic in the course of the sixth century was no doubt due in part to the example and influence of the Franks. This conversion likewise prepared the way and laid the foundations for the building up of a distinctly Christian-Roman civilization and the formation of a family of Christian nations—a united Christendom. By entering the Catholic Church the Franks received free access to the treasures of Roman culture and civilization which the Church had salvaged in the general social and political upheaval that befell Europe in the fifth century. Moreover, unity of religion and worship between the Frankish rulers and their Gallo-Roman subjects made possible the amalgamation of opposing racial elements and the building up of a strong political body. The gradual incorporation of the other Teutonic tribes into the Kingdom of the Franks facilitated the spread and growth of Catholicism and the expansion of Christ's kingdom in the new European world that was in the making.

4. There is, of course, also a dark side to the picture of Catholi-

cism in the Frankish Kingdom. Although the conversion of Clovis and his people was sincere it was far from being perfect. This is evident from the historical records of that age in which we find the old sad story of superstition, sin and vice defiling the lives of Christians, both ruling and ruled. On the other hand, there are not wanting examples of sincere repentance, eminent piety and charity, heroic virtue and holiness. It required a great deal of hard, patient work to transform these recent converts from the follies and corruptions of heathenism into sincere and good Christians whose lives revealed the truth, the beauty of their Catholic faith. Happily the men to do this arduous work were not wanting. The names of the illustrious Bishops St. Avitus of Vienne (d. 518), St. Remigius of Rheims (d. 535), St. Caesar of Arles (d. 542), St. Nicetius of Treves (d. 566), St. Germain of Paris (d. 576), St. Gregory of Tours (d. 594), Venantius Fortunatus of Poitiers (d.c. 601) recall some of the apostolic workers in the Lord's vineyard. The efforts of these men thoroughly to christianize the Franks were actively supported by the Popes. Most effective help, however, was received from the great number of Irish monks whose insatiable thirst for spiritual conquests drew them from the seclusion of their monasteries to the mission field of Gaul and Burgundy. Foremost among these Irish missioners is *St. Columbanus* who set out from the monastery of Bangor in Ireland with eleven companions in 590 (595?) to preach the Gospel in Gaul. As a powerful preacher of penance and reform, who fearlessly denounced sins and vices of Kings and nobles no less than of serfs and peasants, as an energetic founder and director of monasteries and zealous missioner Columbanus labored for about twenty years in Gaul, until he was forced to leave in consequence of the wrath of offended royalty, whose sins and vices he had not failed to chastise. The most important foundation made by the Saint in Burgundy is the monastery of Luxeuil which became a flourishing center of piety and asceticism, learning and missionary activity. Exile and persecution did not dampen the ardor of his apostolic zeal. He finally resolved to cross the Alps and in 612 he arrived at Milan in Italy. At Bobbio, between Milan and Genoa, he founded a monastery which became a stronghold of orthodoxy in Northern Italy. Here he ended his apostolic career with a holy death in 615.

Section III - The Seventh and Eighth Centuries

1. Conversion of England 597-700

1. While St. Patrick and his companions and successors were bringing the blessings of Christianity to the inhabitants of Ireland (432-500) a profound political and religious change took place in England. In the fourth century Christianity had been fairly well established throughout the whole of this extensive and most remote province of the West Roman Empire, but during the period extending from 447-597 paganism reconquered the greater part of the land. In consequence of repeated raids and invasions followed by settlements of heathen Jutes, Angles and Saxons from the northwestern coast regions of the Continent, the old political provincial organization broke down and the ancient Roman Province broke up into many little kingdoms. Religion and civilization suffered a severe loss. The native Christian Britons were driven by the heathen conquerors to the western coast of the island. The Roman-British Church was practically destroyed, except in the territory which is now roughly Wales and Cornwallis. Difference of race, language, customs, religion together with hatred of the rude conquerors and fear of their barbarism engendered in the Christian Britons an attitude of aloofness from the Anglo-Saxon invaders which choked all interest in their Christianization.

2. The resolve and plan to reconquer Britain for the Kingdom of Christ came from Rome, where St. Gregory I (590-604), the Great, occupied the Chair of Peter. In the year 596 he organized a missionary expedition to England by commissioning St. Augustine, prior of the monastery on the Celian hill, which Gregory had founded, to set out with about thirty-nine of the monks of his community to evangelize the country. St. Augustine and his companions arrived in England in the spring of 597 and landed in Thanet, probably at the mouth of the Stone. The missioners were favorably received by Ethelbert, the Kinglet of Kent, who was married to Bertha, a Frankish princess and good Christian woman. Having received permission to preach the Gospel in his dominion Augustine and his helpers began their work. Conversions soon followed. On Pentecost 597 Ethelbert, himself, received holy

baptism. Such was the prestige given to monarchy by the Roman tradition that even a King on his small scale decided the religious issue for his people. Kentish freemen and numerous slaves were baptized on various occasions by the thousands. Augustine was consecrated bishop in Gaul, returned to England and was joined by three more missionaries sent by Pope Gregory—Justin, Melitus and Paulinus. They brought with them the pallium, the symbol of Metropolitan jurisdiction, which the Pope conferred on Augustine, who now began the work of ecclesiastical organization by choosing Canterbury for his episcopal See. Later on he founded a second episcopal See at Rochester and a third one at London. Justin became the first Bishop of Rochester and Melitus was given the See of London. Pope St. Gregory took a keen, active interest in the English Mission up to the very day of his death in 604. By sage and practical advice he helped the missionaries to accomplish their task. According to his directions they showed prudent regard for the customs of the people and spared whatever was not superstitious or contrary to Christian morals. Pagan temples were not destroyed but purified from all idolatrous defilement and dedicated to the worship of God. Popular festivals and amusements were likewise not abolished but cleansed from all objectionable features and transformed into festivities befitting a Christian people.

3. A circumstance that hampered the activity of St. Augustine and his Roman helpers was the refusal of the British bishops living in the western part of the land to cooperate with him in the work of reconquering the eastern part for the Church. Twice meetings were held to secure some cooperation but without success. In the year 604 both St. Gregory I, the founder and patron of the English mission enterprise, and St. Augustine, the head and chief of the mission-workers, were called to their heavenly reward.

Not without struggles and setbacks, outbreaks of pagan hostilities, disappointments and trials did the valiant missionaries, who continued the work begun by St. Augustine and his thirty-nine helpers, achieve the victory of Christianity over Anglo-Saxon heathenism. After the death of Ethelbert, Kinglet of Kent, in 616, Edwin of Northumbria rose to power in the northeastern district of the island. He was baptized in 624 and York was established

as the first bishopric of his realm. Paulinus, one of St. Augustine's companions, was made first Bishop of York by Justin, the Archbishop of Canterbury. York became an important center of missionary activity for the northern part of the country. A fierce uprising of the pagans in 633 brought death to Edwin and missionary activities received a setback.

4. New life was however brought to the mission-field with the coming from the monastery of Hy or Iona of *St. Aidan,* the Apostle of Northumbria. A monastery was established at Lindisfarne together with a bishopric. St. Aidan became Bishop of Lindisfarne in 635 and labored with untiring zeal up to his death in 651. His example and labors were nobly imitated by his successors in the See of Lindisfarne, St. Finan (d. 661) and St. Colman (d. 676). These Celtic missionaries naturally brought with them their Irish customs and traditions which differed in various ways from those of the Roman missionaries. The question of uniformity of practice and unity of ecclesiastical administration gave rise to lively disputes between the two groups. The controversy was settled by the Council of Whitby held in 664. It was decided that the practice of the universal Church should be followed everywhere in England and close union with Rome be maintained. This decision of the Council was chiefly due to *St. Wilfrid,* Abbot of Ripon, the most prominent figure in the assembly. Wilfrid was a native of England but had received his education in Rome and Lyons. The Supremacy of Rome in all matters ecclesiastical was a dominant idea in his somewhat stormy career. The outcome of the Council of Whitby brought bitter disappointment to some of the Celtic missionaries and induced them to retire from the mission-field. St. Wilfrid became Archbishop of York, but a peculiar combination of circumstances prevented a peaceful occupation of his See. This state of affairs induced him to devote himself to missionary work in the southern section of England. The conversion of Sussex, the last kingdom of the so-called Heptarchy, in 678 is due in great part to his zealous labors.

5. An important figure in the history of the Anglo-Saxon Church is *Theodore of Tarsus,* who was sent to England by Pope Vitalian (657-672) as Archbishop of Canterbury in 669. Of the administration of this learned, zealous and energetic churchman St. Bede

the Venerable speaks in terms of highest praise in his History of the Anglo-Saxon Church. Theodore made a visitation of the whole English Church, corrected abuses and irregularities, appointed bishops to vacant Sees, established schools of higher learning and introduced a complete diocesan organization into the English Church, and held the First Ecclesiastical Synod of the English Church in 673.—His twenty-one years of labor in behalf of the early Anglo-Saxon Church yielded abundant fruit. He died in 690.

By the end of the seventh century the Anglo-Saxons in England had practically all found their way into the fold of Christ. A characteristic feature of early Christian life in the Anglo-Saxon Church is the great number of souls that consecrated themselves to the service of God in the monasteries and convents that had been established all over the land. More than thirty members of the royal families in England entered the cloister in the seventh and eighth centuries. The monasteries of England became centers of learning and culture as well as sanctuaries of virtue and holiness. Within their hallowed precincts were trained the apostolic men destined to evangelize Germany and other parts of the Continent.

2. The Conversion of Germany

1. At the beginning of the fifth century the Teutonic tribes living east of the Rhine and north of the Danube Rivers were practically all pagan. Moreover the Christian communities south of the Danube were overrun by pagan invaders, so that these regions became paganized again by the end of this century. This extensive mission field is meant when we speak of the conversion of Germany. The conversion of these war-loving tribes was made difficult by the political hatred of the Franks and the fear that the acceptance of the Christian religion, which the Franks professed, would include the loss of their political autonomy and independence. Another obstacle to the conversion of Germany were certain peculiar juridical and moral conceptions regarding manly self-assertion and self-defense against every opponent and aggressor, which made revenge imperative and the test of courage and valor. For minds imbued with such notions, the doctrine of the meek and humble Saviour, who chose to redeem the world by voluntary suffering, had little appeal. Accordingly the downfall of paganism

and the firm establishment of Christianity in Germany was not accomplished in less than three hundred years (roughly 520-800).

2. The number of Frankish missionaries in Germany was small and these were active in Bavaria. They were generally monks who founded monasteries, the Abbots of which became bishops. *St. Rupert,* Bishop of Worms, is called the Apostle of Bavaria and came to the country in 693. *St. Emmeran,* (d. ab. 715), the founder of the diocese of Regensburg and *St. Korbinian,* (d. ab. 725), the founder of Freising are likewise famous Frankish missionaries.

Numerous however were the Irish monks, who came from their monasteries in Ireland to evangelize Germany. In nearly every district they erected their huts and labored zealously to convert the inhabitants. St. Columban was active three years in the region along the Lake of Constance. St. Gall (d. 645), one of his original eleven companions, continued the work of evangelizing after his departure for Italy. The "cell" of St. Gall became the germ of a later monastic establishment, famous in the annals of Christian Germany—the Abbey of St. Gall. Another famous Irish missioner was *St. Trudpert* (d. 643?) the founder of a celebrated monastery in the Breisgau. *St. Firmin* established the monastery of Reichanau, the school of which became famous within a short time throughout Germany. *St. Kilian* together with Koloman, a priest and Totnan a deacon won the crown of martyrdom at Wuerzburg towards the end of the seventh century (689).

3. The excellent work done by the Irish monks was however of a preparatory nature. Systematization and organization of all missionary activities was necessary in order to insure permanent results. This important requirement was fulfilled with the coming of the *Anglo-Saxon Monks* who since the beginning of the eighth century were the only workers in the German mission-field. As members of the Order of St. Benedict they had become accustomed to hierarchical organization and to living according to one and the same monastic Rule, and were closely united with one another. This facilitated coordination and cooperation in missionary activity and greater uniformity in policy and methods. Owing to the Roman origin of Anglo-Saxon monasticism, close connection with Rome, the center of Catholic unity, was a hallowed tradition among these missioners, which proved highly

beneficial to the Church in Germany. Lastly they enjoyed the favor, protection and support of the energetic Carolingian rulers who were rising to power and influence at this time. This happy coincidence was likewise a factor that contributed to the achievement of permanent success. The first of the Anglo-Saxon Benedictines deserving honorable mention is *St. Willibrord, the Apostle of Frisia.* He came to this country with eleven companions about the year 690. In 695 he was consecrated bishop in Rome and continued his zealous labors in behalf of the pagan Frisians until his death in 739. The monastery of Echternach, which he founded, became the center and support of missionary activity in Frisia. The foundation of the Bishopric of Utrecht together with an important monastery was also his work. St. Suitbert, St. Ludger, St. Willihad are some of the illustrious men that followed the Apostle of Frisia and completed the Christianization of Frisia at the close of the eighth century.

4. Foremost among all the Anglo-Saxon missionaries in Germany is *St. Boniface, the Apostle of Germany.* Born of noble parents at Kirton in Wessex about the year 675 Boniface or Wynfrith, as he was called before his episcopal consecration, felt an attraction to the monastic life at an early date. After overcoming the opposition of his father, he entered the Order of St. Benedict and received an excellent ascetical, literary and scientific education in the monastery of Exeter and later in that of Nhutselle. During these years of prayer and study the desire to carry the light of the Gospel to his kindred in Germany became the dominant ambition of his life. In 716 he set out from England to begin his apostolic career on the Continent. Three phases may be distinguished in this glorious quest for souls: a) the time of early missionary attempts (716-722), b) the period of extensive and fruitful missionary activity (722-738), c) the closing period of Church-organization and Church-reform (738-754).

a) (716-722)

5. Boniface began his labors in Frisia where St. Willibrord and others had been preaching the Gospel. Political disturbances induced him to return to England. After two years he returned to the Continent and made a journey to Rome where he was kindly received by Pope Gregory II. The Vicar of Christ praised and

approved his missionary project, and gave him detailed instructions with regard to the procedure to be followed. Encouraged by this papal approval he went to Thuringia and then back to Frisia, the mission field of St. Willibrord, and finally to Hessia. In spite of disappointments and difficulties, a rich harvest of souls won for Christ and heaven spurred the valiant mission-pioneer on to greater efforts. Towards the end of 722 Boniface paid a second visit to Rome where he was consecrated bishop by Pope Gregory and received the name Boniface. With letters of recommendation addressed by the Pope to the Christians of Thuringia and Saxony, the Bishops and the German people, Boniface returned to Germany as regional Bishop, authorized to regulate ecclesiastical affairs in Germany according to the prescriptions of the sacred canons.

b) (722-738)

The years from 722-738 are the years during which Boniface achieved splendid success among the Hessians and Thuringians. In the country of the former he felled the oak sacred to the thunder-god Thor. When the heathens saw that no harm befell the offender, they realized the helplessness of their imaginary deity. The fall of this oak in 724 marked the downfall of paganism in the land. With the help of many zealous mission-workers both men and women, that came from England Boniface succeeded in transforming Thuringia, which in 725 was half Christian and half-pagan into a thoroughly Christian country. Although great as a missionary Boniface was greater still as an organizer. In 732 he sent a report on the state of his missions to Gregory III (731-741) the successor of Gregory II. In view of the excellent work accomplished by him and his fellow-workers, the Pope appointed him Archbishop with authority and commission to appoint Bishops wherever necessary.

c) (738-754)

In 738 Boniface made his third journey to Rome where he remained for nearly a whole year. Returning as papal legate for the Church in Germany he began to introduce into Bavaria and Middle-Germany a permanent diocesan organization. The ablest and most saintly and zealous men among his fellow workers were appointed bishops of the new Sees. Monasteries and convents were

established which became centers of learning, piety and missionary activity. In the monastic schools sons and daughters of noble families received a solid Christian education. The monastery of *Fulda* and its famous school was established by Boniface in 744 and put in charge of St. Sturmi as first Abbot.

6. Beginning with 741 Boniface held Synods throughout the whole Frankish Kingdom. The first National Synod (Concilium Germanicum) held in 742 made regulations for the government of dioceses, and the ordering of clerical life. General Synods for the whole Frankish Kingdom were held in 745 and 747 which enacted salutary decrees aiming at the suppression of superstition and heretical tendencies, the reform of abuses in the lives of the clergy and the administration of the churches, the improvement of Christian morals among the laity. In 745 Boniface chose the Bishopric of Mainz as his Metropolitan See, which was raised to the rank of a Primatial See for Middle Germany by papal decree in 751. By his reformatory work Boniface conferred an immense blessing upon the Church in Germany. When the venerable apostle had completed his work of organization and reform the yearning for evangelizing the pagans again filled his soul. After resigning his See with permission of the Pope, he appointed St. Lullus, his disciple, whom he had consecrated bishop in 752 as his successor in 754. In the same year he set out with fifty-two companions to conquer the last remnant of pagans in Frisia. His last efforts were crowned with the glory of martyrdom. On June 5, 754 or 755 a band of furious idolaters fell upon the Saint and his companions when gathered together for the administration of confirmation and murdered the valiant soldiers of Christ. According to a wish expressed in his life, the sacred relics of the martyred Apostle found burial in the Church of the Abbey of Fulda, his favorite foundation.

Conversion of the Saxons

7. More than once during his life St. Boniface had expressed his ardent desire to evangelize the *Saxons*, a group of Teutonic tribes living in the northeastern part of Germany, who defied the power of the Franks for three hundred years. This noble desire of Germany's Apostle remained unfulfilled. Others were destined by

Divine Providence to bring these hereditary foes of Christianity into Christ's Kingdom. Fearless preachers of the Gospel such as St. Eligius of Noyon, the two sainted Ewalds, St. Livinus had ventured to penetrate into this stronghold of paganism towards the end of the seventh century to preach the Gospel of salvation. The martyrs' crown was their reward. Partial success was achieved by missionaries from the monastery of Fulda and other neighboring monastic houses, who labored in this field in the latter part of the eighth century. In 782 however a general insurrection broke out. The missionaries were either killed or expelled from the country, churches were demolished and Christian Saxons compelled to apostatize. Charlemagne put down the rebellion with terrible severity. After another unsuccessful uprising in 785 the two Saxon leaders Widukind and Alboin received baptism. A peace of eight years followed, during which the work of pacification and evangelizing made happy progress. Seven Bishoprics were established which gave stability to the Church and made an orderly administration possible. Many monasteries were established which helped to consolidate missionary activity and to promote the work of Christian education. The most important foundation of this time is the *Abbey New Corbie* established in 822 by monks from Old Corbie in Picardy. St. Ansgar was the first director of the Abbey's monastic school. What Fulda was in Middle Germany, St. Call and Reichenau in South Germany, a leading center of religious fervor, of learning and culture, New Corbie became in North Germany. Among the apostolic laborers that won the Saxon land for Christ St. Willehad Bishop of Bremen (d. 789) St. Ludger Bishop of Muenster (d. 809) and Abbot Sturmi of Fulda are the most prominent. At the death of Emperor Charlemagne in 814 the conversion of the Saxons was practically complete. During the reign of his son Louis the Pious 814-840 the Church attained a dominant position in the country and a decisive influence upon the private, social and political life of the people.

Section IV - The Ninth to the Twelfth Centuries

From the ninth to the twelfth centuries the missionary activity of the Church was devoted to the Christianization of the inhabi-

tants of the Scandinavian countries in the North of Europe and of the Slavic Nations and the Hungarians living in the south-eastern part of the Continent.

1. Conversion of the Scandinavians

A. Denmark

It took three long centuries (825-1125) to accomplish the conversion of Scandinavia. Of decisive importance in bringing about this happy result was the favorable intervention of the civil rulers of these northern people. Successful work in this sector of the mission-field began with the coming of *St. Ansgar,* "the Boniface of the North" in 826. Invited by King Harald of Denmark who had been baptized in Mainz in that year, this highly gifted and deeply religious monk came from the Abbey Old Corbie and began to evangelize the Danes. When Harald, his royal protector, was driven from the throne by his enemies, Ansgar realized that for the present, there was little hope for successful missionary work in Denmark. He therefore gladly accepted the invitation of Swedish nobles to preach the Gospel in their land. For a year and a half he labored successfully in Sweden. In 833 he appealed to Emperor Louis the Pious for helpers in the mission field and for material support of the difficult work. The Archbishopric of Hamburg was established and Ansgar made Archbishop and Legate of the Pope for the North by Pope Gregory IV. With new courage Ansgar resumed his work in Denmark. He gave special attention to the education of a Native Clergy. In 843 the zealous apostle's fortitude was severely tried. The revenues for the support of his missions were withdrawn by King Charles the Bald and two years later the Norsemen destroyed Hamburg and drove the Archbishop from his See. Deprived of all possessions he wandered about, a forlorn, penniless exile. Nevertheless he would not abandon the missionary enterprise to which he had once dedicated his life. Hamburg was united to the Bishopric of Bremen and assigned to Ansgar. He resumed his work in Denmark and also went to Sweden a second time to preach the Gospel. The Kings of Denmark Eric I and Eric II granted full freedom to preach the Gospel in their realm but did not accept the Christian faith themselves. In general the fruits of the hard labor of Ansgar were comparatively meagre. He lacked the able helpers, which St. Boniface had

the good fortune of obtaining in such great numbers from England. In spite of sad disappointments and severe trials St. Ansgar continued faithfully to labor until his holy death in 865. Later generations were to reap with joy what he had sown with tears. St. Rimbert, his disciple, was his successor as missioner and Archbishop. The successors of the Danish Kings Eric I and Eric II were hostile to Christianity, so that the German Kings Henry I and Otto I found it necessary to force them to permit the preaching of the Gospel in their dominions. King Harald Blaatand received baptism in 965 and three Bishoprics were established. During the reign of King Canute I (d. 1035) the first monasteries were founded. Thereby the permanence of Christianity in Denmark was assured.

B. Sweden

In Sweden the progress of Christianity was even slower than in Denmark. Not until the beginning of the eleventh century did the work of evangelizing the country become more successful. In 1002 King Olaf received baptism and the bishopric of Skara was established. King Sverker (1133-1155) erected the first monasteries and his successor Eric IX (1155-1160) the Bishopric of Upsala. By these foundations the supremacy of Christianity was secured.

C. Norway

The efforts of King Hacon the Good (938-961) of Norway, who had received a Christian education in England, to promote Christianity in his kingdom met with little success. His successors Olaf Trygvesen (995-1000) and Olaf Haraldson, the Saint (1014-1031) fared better. In the course of the eleventh century Christianity was gradually accepted by the great majority of the inhabitants of Norway.

D. Iceland

Owing to the zeal of King Olaf Trygvesen Christianity reached Iceland and was officially established as the religion of the inhabitants in the year 1000. Greenland was colonized and Christianized by settlers from Iceland.

2. Conversion of the Slavic Nations

1. Since the end of the sixth century the eastern part of the European Continent was occupied by various Slavic tribes. In the

ninth century the Magyars settled in what is now Hungaria and the Bulgarians in the northern section of the Balkan peninsula, thereby dividing the Slavic tribes into two groups, a northern and a southern group. Both the Greek Byzantine Empire and Italy together with Germany became interested in the evangelization of these heathen neighbors. The first Christian communities in the Slavic world were formed among the Croatians in the southern group and from this starting point Christianity spread northward. Towards the end of the eleventh century practically all Slavic tribes were Christian. The circumstance that missioners from the Greek East-Roman Empire took part with their Latin brethren from the West in the work of bringing the Slavs into the Church of Christ produced religious, cultural and political effects that had a great influence upon their historical development and are visible in some measure even today.

Southern group of Slavs

2. a) *The Croatians* embraced Christianity already during the last decades of the seventh century 670-680 in response to the preaching of the Gospel by Roman missionaries. The remainder of the nation was won to the faith in the first half of the eighth century.

b) *The Slovenians* were brought into the Church by missionaries from Germany towards the end of the eighth and the beginning of the ninth century.

c) Greek missionaries from the East re-converted the *Serbians* to the Christian faith after their relapse into paganism in the second half of the ninth century.

d) About the middle of the same century Prince Bogoris, the ruler of the *Bulgarians,* was baptized by Greek missioners and took the name Michael in baptism in honor of the East-Roman Emperor, who acted as his sponsor. The Prince earnestly exhorted his subjects to follow his example. Fearing the loss of political independence in consequence of preponderant influence of East-Rome, Bogoris turned to Pope St. Nicholas I (858-867) and asked for Roman missioners. The Pope promptly answered his request. In 866-867 he sent two Legates to Bulgaria and a number of clerics. The Pope's famous "Responsa ad Bulgaros" gave them wise directions concerning Christian Worship and Church Discipline. In

spite of the great interest shown by the Popes in the growth and development of the Church in Bulgaria, the country later on became affiliated with the Patriarchate of Constantinople and shared in its unfortunate separation from the Chair of Peter.

Northern group of Slavs

a) Moravia—The "Apostles of the Slavs"

3. In the history of the Christianization of the Slavic world two figures stand out prominently as "the Apostles of the Slavs." They are the two Greek monks and brothers St. Cyril and St. Methodius who labored among the Moravians from 863-867. The invention of a Slavic alphabet, the translation of parts of the Bible into the Slavic language and the use of this language in the sacred functions of the Liturgy were means employed by these apostolic men to promote the spread of Christianity among the people. Invited by Pope St. Nicholas I in 867 they went to Rome and gave an account of their missionary work. St. Cyril died in Rome but St. Methodius returned to Moravia after having been made Archbishop of Moravia by the successor of St. Nicholas I, Pope Hadrian II. He continued his apostolic work up to his death in 885. Difficulties and trials and even imprisonment accompanied the exercise of his apostolic ministry. Pope John VIII (872-882) became his staunch protector and defender in his great struggles against his adversaries. This energetic Vicar of Christ secured his liberation from bondage, acquitted him of heresy laid to his charge and gave him permission to use the Slavic tongue in the Sacred Liturgy. In the first decade of the tenth century Moravia was overrun by the pagan Magyars, lost its political independence, and to a great extent also its religion. Rebuilding the lost faith was the task slowly accomplished in the tenth century.

b) Christianity in Bohemia

Bohemia was opened to the reception of the Christian faith in the first decade of the ninth century. Although fourteen Czech chieftains and a considerable number of their followers received Christian baptism in 845 the great majority of the people clung stubbornly to their pagan superstition. Towards the end of the same century however, the work of Christianizing the Czech nation began to make more rapid progress owing to the example and

influence of the Ducal family of Prague which gained a sort of political supremacy over all the Czech tribes. Spitigniew I, commonly called the first Christian Duke of Bohemia, his mother, St. Ludmilla and his nephew Duke Wenceslaus, the Saint, were zealous promoters of the Christian faith. The bright example of virtue and holiness of life given to the Czech nation by St. Ludmilla and her grandson St. Wenceslaus attracted many to the new religion. On the other hand their zeal for religion aroused the hatred and wrath of pagan nationalists who found a strong supporter in Boleslaus I, the pagan brother of St. Wenceslaus. An insurrection followed which led to the murder of St. Ludmilla in 921, and brought the crown of martyrdom to St. Wenceslaus in 929. King Otto I of Germany became the protector of the persecuted Czech Christians and in 950 Duke Boleslaus became a Christian and endeavored to repair the damage he had done to the Church in his earlier years. During the reign of his son and successor Duke Boleslaus II, surnamed the Pious (967-999) the first bishopric was established in Bohemia and the complete triumph of Christianity over paganism achieved. In connection with this triumph the names of two illustrious Saints deserve special mention. St. Wolfgang, Bishop of Ratisbon in Germany 972-994 not only showed a lively, active interest in the Christianization of the Czech nation but also overcame all petty racial and political rivalry that blocked the way to the establishment of the Bishopric of Prague, by unselfishly renouncing his rights of jurisdiction over Czech territory. St. Adalbert, the second Bishop of Prague, distinguished himself as an intrepid champion of Christian morality against pagan sins and vices. His uncompromising zeal brought him much suffering and exile. This zeal prompted him to preach the Gospel also to the fierce pagan Prussians, who put him to death in 997.

c) Conversion of Poland

The conversion of Poland to Christianity began with the marriage of Duke Mieczyslaw to the Catholic Princess Dubrowka, the daughter of Duke Boleslaw I of Bohemia in 965.—Nobles and people quickly followed the example of their Christian rulers, so that by the year 1000 the country was altogether Catholic. The work of Christianization was greatly promoted by the labors of the

Sons of St. Benedict whom Duke Boleslaw Chrobry (992-1025) invited to make foundations in various parts of his realm.

d) Russia

Russia's conversion to Christianity was inaugurated by the baptism of Princess Olga in 955 and that of her grandson Prince Vladimir in 988. In the course of the next century the people followed the example of their rulers and entered the Church. In 1035 Kiev became the Metropolitan See of the country. Greek missionaries were the preachers of the Gospel to the Russians whose ecclesiastical affiliation with Constantinople dragged them into the Greek schism.

3. Conversion of the Magyars or Hungarians

1. In the first part of the tenth century Germany and northern Italy suffered much from the heathen Magyars who overran these countries plundering, burning and killing as they went along. These marauding expeditions came to an end when they suffered a crushing defeat in the memorable battle on the Lechfeld in 955. The victorious German King Otto I prepared the way for their Christianization. Missionaries from Germany such as St. Wolfgang later Bishop of Ratisbon and St. Adalbert Archbishop of Prague and others began to evangelize the subdued Magyars with success in the last quarter of the tenth century. The prospects of conversion grew brighter when Duke Geza (Geysa) sole ruler of the land since 970, together with his son and successor Vaik received holy baptism in 985. Vaik took the name of Stephen. Many prominent retainers of the Duke and a considerable number of his subjects followed the example of their leader. In many cases however these conversions were little more than an external acceptance of a new religious worship. Time and work was needed to exterminate deeply rooted heathen customs and practices to which the people remained addicted in spite of their external profession of Christianity. The thorough Christianization of the country and introduction of a complete ecclesiastical organization is in great part the work of St. Stephen, "the Apostolic King" who ruled from 997-1038. During his reign ecclesiastics from Germany, Italy and France came in great number to his kingdom and labored zealously to transform the Magyars into a distinctly Catholic nation. With

papal approval St. Stephen divided his realm into ten dioceses under the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan See of Gran. Naturally this splendid growth of Catholicism did not remain unchallenged. The party of obstinate pagans still holding their own, rose in armed rebellion, drove Stephen's successor Peter from the throne, murdered bishops and priests. Christianity declined and a part of the nation sank back into heathenism. King Andrew I (1047-1060) gradually succeeded in repairing the losses caused by the insurrection. At the end of his reign there remained only a small fraction of pagans in the country. These again attempted a revolt when Bela I (1060-1063) came to the throne but they were quickly vanquished by the King. During the reign of Bela's son, Ladislaus, the Saint (1077-1095), the last remnants of paganism disappeared.

4. Conversion of the Wends and Pommeranians

1. At the beginning of the twelfth century the northeastern borderland of Germany was practically pagan territory. There lived a number of tribes designated by the collective name of *Wends*. Missionaries from Germany had tried to bring them into the fold of Christ during the past century but the fruits of their labor were meagre. Brighter days dawned when *St. Norbert,* the founder of the Premonstratensian Order (1125) came to these regions and as Archbishop of Magdeburg began to organize missionary activity among the heathens. Many monasteries of his Order were established throughout this territory from which many apostolic men set out to evangelize the pagans. Simultaneously with the Norbertines, the Cistercians contributed a great deal to the progress of Christianity in these regions. Numerous monasteries of their Order became centers of Christian civilization and together with the blessings of civilized life they conferred the higher blessings of Christian belief and life on the heathen populations, attracted to their peaceful dwellings. In this way the work of Christianizing another pagan land was completed by the middle of the next century.

2. Another pagan land that was gradually conquered for Christ in the course of the twelfth century is Pommerania, the territory between the Vistula and the Oder Rivers. In 1121 Boleslaw III, Duke of neighboring Poland, brought the pagan inhabitants of

this territory into submission to his rule and obtained from them the promise to accept the Christian faith. St. Otto, Bishop of Bamberg, earned for himself the honorable title "Apostle of Pommerania." Accompanied by a great number of his clergy the zealous bishop made two missionary tours of the country in 1124 and 1128, preaching the Gospel of Christ everywhere. Soon the entire people professed the Christian faith. Monasteries of Norbertines and Cistercians established within a short time in the country helped to confirm and consolidate the work of Otto and his associates. By the middle of the next century Pommerania too had its place in the universal Kingdom of Christ.

Conclusion—Some remarks on Medieval Mission Methods

The greatest and most far-reaching missionary achievement of the Church during the nine centuries was undoubtedly the conversion of the Celtic, Germanic and Slavic tribes of Europe.

A. When Christianizing the Graeco-Roman world, the Church dealt with people who more or less enjoyed the highly developed Graeco-Roman culture and civilization. The barbarian tribes that became the masters of Europe were devoid of this culture and civilization and taken as a whole stood on a lower level of civilization than the Christian missionaries that came to preach to them Christ's Gospel. Accordingly the Church not only endeavored to bring to them the supernatural blessings of Christ's saving religion but also to transmit to them the natural benefits of Roman civilization, purged of its pagan and pernicious elements.

B. When evangelizing the Graeco-Romans the Church directed her appeal to individuals or greater or smaller groups of individuals and endeavored to win them for Christ by means of personal conviction of the truth and necessity of his religion and by voluntary affiliation with his Kingdom on earth. Owing to the peculiar racial, social and political conditions existing among the barbarian tribes that entered European history in the fourth century, individuals were completely subordinate to and dependent upon the clan, tribe, race and polity of which they were members. Personal initiative and independent action, even in matters religious was greatly restricted and hampered by group domination. In her missionary activity among these new peoples, the Church from the

start made it her aim and task not so much to win persons as such, as to influence and convert whole communities. In order to attain this end her missionary appeal was directed first of all and above all to persons of social or political distinction and importance, notably to the heads or leaders of tribes, to rulers of kingdoms. Through their conversion she hoped to win the masses without great difficulty. The movement of conversion proceeded therefore from above downward, from kings or rulers to their retainers or followers, from these to nobles and freemen down to freedmen and serfs.

C. Connected with the mass-conversions effected in this way we see the practice of *quick baptism*. Some of the most eminent missionaries, for instance St. Boniface and St. Ludger baptised great crowds after a comparatively short time of preaching in a given district. The task of strengthening and deepening the Christianity, thus planted in the hearts of these neophytes, by initiating them into a better knowledge of their faith and more prefect practice of the Christian life was left to a future date. Systematic training and organization were expected to bring Christian individuals and communities to maturity. Some writers (Lau and Konen for instance) have asserted that catechetical instruction had scarcely any place in German mission-work. The discovery of a "Carolingian Mission Catechism" which gives plan and outlines for a series of six catechetical instructions for pagans proves the assertion to be false.

D. The building of monasteries in centrally located points of a particular mission area is another specific feature of medieval mission methods. These institutions were established to support and exercise the pastoral care of the new converts, to perform cultural services such as teaching the arts of peace, the cultivation of the soil, the fostering of learning and science, and to provide nurseries for a native clergy.

Ecclesiastical organization was also an integral part of and in fact the keystone of medieval missionary activity. On completing the conversion of communities, the first care of the missionaries was to create as soon as possible permanent centers around which the ecclesiastical life would resolve; hence they built churches, installed priests, organized Christian communities. Finally the

erection of dioceses and their union under a metropolitan See together with a strong bond of union with Rome completed the edifice of organization.

In the selection and occupation of missionary territories, in the choice of strategic points in particular areas for centers of activity the missionaries showed remarkable perspicacity combined with high idealism.

E. Another prominent feature that characterized the medieval method of evangelizing pagan barbarians is the free application of the principle of accommodation or adaptation to the customs, practices and views of the pagans to whom the Gospel was preached. This accommodation was limited by the purity of Christian faith and the integrity of the Christian moral law. Beyond these limits there was a wide range for accommodation. Like St. Paul who knew well how to be a Jew with Jews, a Gentile with the uncircumcised, St. Patrick knew how to become a Gael with the Irish, St. Augustine turned Briton in England, St. Boniface made himself German with his Teutons. St. Gregory I in his instructions and directions for the mission work in England recommended and approved this accommodation and the Anglo-Saxon missionaries on the continent preserved and followed this papal guidance. Every student of Mission history knows that in applying this sound principle to concrete cases the line of distinction between what is lawful and not lawful is not always clearly discernible and lack of caution may lead to abuses. We need not be surprised that in the medieval missions the accommodation theory at times occasioned opposition and friction.

Only apparently opposed to the principle of sparing pagan practices is the violent destruction of some pagan shrines or idols by eminent missionaries such as St. Boniface, St. Willibrord, St. Ludger. This destruction was intended to be an ocular demonstration of the utter powerlessness of the pagan deities. When the pagans beheld the missionaries destroy these symbols of their superstition with complete impunity, they became convinced that their imaginary gods were really helpless and powerless when they encountered the heralds of the Cross. This demonstration went far to shatter their superstitious belief and make them bow to the truth of the Gospel.

Of a different character, however, was the wholesale destruc-

tion of pagan shrines and temples and idols executed by the soldiers of the victorious Frankish military forces. These often provoked hatred and opposition rather than smoothed the way for conversion.

F. Lastly we must mention the phenomenon of *compulsory baptism* which we meet in the process of converting the pagan Germans. In the later German missionary activities we must distinguish the *imperial* Frankish mission expeditions under the auspices of the Frankish rulers—Merovingians and Carolingians—and the expeditions of the *vocational* Celtic and Anglo-Saxon missionaries. In the former the material factor of force and compulsion unfortunately played a great part. Promises and threats, and even force and compulsion were regarded as suitable means to bring about conversion. The result of such a procedure was an external, superficial Christianization of the victims of compulsion. To make sincere believers and practical observers of the Christian law of these neophytes required much patient labor, kindness and forbearance, diligent instruction and training, prayers and sacrifice of the monks and clerics to whose pastoral care they became entrusted. The close alliance between the State and the Church, between religion and politics, that was established with the founding and building up of the Frankish Kingdom explains but does not justify compulsory baptism of the pagan population of conquered territories. The practice was discountenanced and condemned in the writings of the most eminent churchmen and missionaries.

Altogether different was the method of the *vocational* Celtic and Anglo-Saxon missionaries. They appeared as free and independent messengers of the Gospel whose only object was the conversion of the Germans to the Christian faith. Force and violence had no place in their mission plans. By preaching and instruction, by kindness and beneficence, by their model lives, their own prayers and Holy Masses and those of their friends in their homeland, they tried to bring the pagans into Christ's Kingdom and make them share the blessings of redemption while at the same time they communicated to them the advantages of true culture and civilization. They did not fail to secure the protection and support of temporal rulers, in as far as necessary, and also material aid, especially in the form of appropriations for the establishment

and support of mission centers. The missionary work proper they, however, carried on in a spiritual, truly apostolic fashion. They planted and watered for the Lord and the Lord gave growth thirty, sixty and even a hundredfold.

Study Outline

CATHOLIC MISSIONS IN THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES

(Fourth to Thirteenth Centuries)

1. *According to research workers, there were fifty million inhabitants living in the Roman Empire in the early part of the fourth century. How many were Christians?*

2. *Among the Romans to whom did the word* pagani *refer?*

3. *At the end of the fourth century, compare the attitude of the Roman Emperors toward Christianity and paganism.*

4. *Why did most of the Teutonic tribes that settled within the confines of the Roman Empire embrace Christianity in the perverted form of Arianism?*

5. *Name at least two agents of the Holy Spirit that labored to bring both heretic and pagan into the true fold of Christ in the Empire.*

6. *Mention how and in what centuries Catholicism was brought to Persia, Armenia and Africa.*

7. *Briefly give an account of the life and missionary activities of St. Patrick.*

8. *Outline the early missionary activities in England.*

9. *How was the Faith brought to Germany?*

10. *Explain some methods of the Medieval missionaries.*

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VOCATIONS

"I think the problem of vocations for the foreign missions, or rather the problem of increasing vocations for the foreign missions is almost identical with the problem of priestly vocations in general. If there are more vocations for the priesthood, we will have more vocations for the foreign missions, and, of course, that holds also for the other vocations through the sisterhoods and brotherhoods for the foreign missions. I think the whole problem resolves itself into this. It is important, it is necessary that every priest have the missionary spirit—the priest at home I mean. The priest at home must encourage vocations to the foreign missions. If the priest at home has the necessary spirit, has a broad, worldwide Catholic outlook, then I don't think there will be any lack of vocations for the foreign missions, and we will need a great many more vocations for the foreign missions. The whole world is looking toward the United States to fill the gaps that have been caused by the present war. In fact, not only should we fill the gaps, we should also increase the foreign mission work.

I know a priest who is a mathematics professor, and he has about thirty vocations to his credit. You wouldn't think that of a professor. He has encouraged students and people he met to become priests or Sisters or Brothers, and he has followed them up. He has a regular card system. He keeps in touch with them. He sees how they develop and continues to give advice to them. He is an apostolic man. If every priest in this country takes an interest in the foreign missions, then we will have the vocations."

(Comments submitted at recent Vocation Conference,
Hotel Commodore, New York City,
by Rev. Marion Habig, O.F.M.)